Central Inland Water Transport Corporation

*223. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be please to state:

(a) whether Government have received a proposal for revival of the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation; and

(b) if so, the response of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir. Central Inland Water Transport Corporation (CIWTC) had come up with a revised revival package envisaging yet another infusion of funds amounting to more than Rs.200 crore on account of VRS, working capital needs, ways and means assistance, etc. earlier this year.

(b) Government has reviewed the functioning of CIWTC in its entirety and found that the Corporation cannot be revived by fresh infusion of funds. Hence, Government has not agreed to yet another revival package.

SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Sir, this issue is very important. If the revival scheme of the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation is implemented, and regular monitoring of its functioning is done, the performance of CIWTC could improve, and this Corporation could play a pivotal role in the overall development of North-East's water transport sector by using the national waterways as well as the State waterways of West Bengal, in both cargo and passenger transport services. So, the proposal for the revival package of the CIWTC and what the hon. Chief Minister of West Bengal had written in this regard, should be considered. I am not clear why it is not being considered. Will the hon. Minister clarify this point?

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, ever since its inception in 1967, this Corporation has earned nothing but loss. Even during 2001, the Government had decided to write off Rs.420 crores, the principal along with interest thereon. Now, as on 31.03.2003, the accumulated loss was to the extent of Rs.265 crores; and another Rs. 40 crores has been added since then. For the past 37 years, this Corporation has earned losses only. The Ministry has decided to recommend this case to the Cabinet for disinvestment with a heavy heart only, I have decided like that.

SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Sir, my second supplementary is very

simple. The hon. Minister is already thinking over the matter. In reply to part (b) of the question, it is stated that the Corporation cannot be revived by fresh infusion of funds. Then, my question is, if the Corporation cannot be revived by fresh infusion of funds, then, how could it be revived? What steps the Government is going to take in this regard?

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, it cannot be revived. I will be sending the proposal to the Cabinet to see if it can be disinvested. After getting the approval of the Cabinet, I can only disinvest it. I have made many attempts. I have discussed the matter with the hon. Chief Minister. I had written to the Chief Minister on 12th August 2004, and he has replied on 3.9.2004. I had requested him why not the State Government take this Corporation in the fold of the State Government. He has replied "No, it is not possible." At the same time, the hon. Members of Parliament from West Bengal and many hon. Members who are the part and parcel of this House—have met me. I have clearly told them what could be done and what could not be done. So, there is no other way except to seek the advice of the Cabinet to go in for disinvestment.

SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the reply is a very sad reflection on this Government's understanding of the importance of inland transport. Sea-interstate transport is the cheapest, as is practised even in the most developed and the populist countries in the world, starting from Guwahati right up to Kolkata and even passing through the North-East. I understand that the Government cannot keep on giving subsidy. Has the Government tried to examine other ways of private sector participation, which can very actively be engaged in this sector. We had tried that, and people were forthcoming. it gives employment to the people in rural areas—the fishermen to guide the navigation. I want to know from the hon. Minister what attempts have been made by the Government to involve the private operators in this very important mode of transport in order to reduce the load on the road and the rail.

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, the Ministry is proposing to disinvest it. After getting the approval of the Cabinet, we will be disinvesting it. At that time, private operators may also participate in it. Definitely, they can approach the Government to acquire the shares of the Corporation at the time of its disinvestment.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Sir, Shri Goyalji has put a similar

question. Actually, what the hon. Minister is mentioning is limited to the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation. What we want to know is, how do we develop inland transport? The coastline and rivers are very much under-utilised, and if we can develop this mode of transportation, it will, definitely, reduce the pressure on road and rail. It will also help in the development of the North-Eastern Region because then the goods can be transported more cheaply to the North-Eastern Region and also brought from there. What plan does the Government have to develop this mode of transport? It is not a question of disinvesting this Corporation only. Who will buy it, unless there is a general plan for development of inland transport?

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, the Inland Waterways Authority has been set up for the purpose of creating infrastructure, and it has been advised to see to it that almost all the river waterways are dredged. For dredging, we are having a broader spectrum of action and plan outlay. The vessels which are presently available with Central Island Water Transport Corporation, and with private operators could run on there water ways.

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Sir, I am aware that the hon. Minister is working hard on the Sethu Samudram Project. I want to know from the hon. Minister about the benefit we will get once the Sethu Samudram Project is implemented... (*Interruptions*)... It relates to the coastline transport and the hon. Minister is aware of it... (*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat.

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Sir, it cannot be disallowed....Sir, this relates to inland water transport.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take yout seat... (*Interruptions*)... I will not allow. Please take yout seat... (*Interruptions*)...

DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I will put a question to the Minister. Twenty five years ago, my maiden speech was on development of minor and major ports in India; not only the costal ports—because we have a very big coastline—but also the inland waterways development. If you look at Europe or Egypt, it is the water ways which are mostly used because this is the cheapest mode of transportation. Here you have said that the Central Inland Water Corporation is running in losses. Why can't the Government just try to revive it in some way? Because, it is the best way of transporting our goods as well as

passengers. We have so many rivers. Why is there on such policy to revive it? Why is it running in losses?

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I can pass on the answer to the hon. Member detailing whatever I have said previously, I do not want to repeat a lengthy reply.

DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA: Why is it not running in profit? ...(*Interruption*)...

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, I can pass it on to the Hon'ble Member. A lot of things are to be discussed on this. A detailed letter will be sent to her.

Subsidence in Eastern Coal Fields Limited

*224. SHRI CHITTABRATA MAJUMADAR:†
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been serious subsidence in Sanctoria area of Eastern Coal Fields Ltd.;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the immediate measures taken, so far to rehabilitate and compensate the affected people; and

(d) the short term/long term measures taken to prevent such subsidence?

THE MINISTER OF COAL (SHRI SHIBU SOREN): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) A subsidence occured in Sanctoria village on 27.11.2004 at about 2.20 P.M. above the old workings of Sanctoria colliery. Cracks have been noticed in 56 houses. These workings were made during the period 1912 to 1923. No mining activites have been undertaken at this place since the formation of Eastern Coalfields Limited.

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†The question was actually asked on the floor of the house by Shri Chittabrata Majumdar.